

COMMENTARY

KIBYA, JERUSALEM, AND THE RIVER JORDAN

Exploring the Sources of U. S. — Israeli Misunderstanding

HAL LEHRMAN

FRESH outbreaks on the Israeli-Arab borders make close and cordial relations between Israel and the West more imperative than ever. Peace or war in the Levant may depend on Anglo-American ability to understand and act on Israel's grievances and on Israel's willingness to stay her hand because of faith in such ability. A survey of Israeli-Western misunderstandings in the recent past is therefore of vital, immediate interest.

Some months ago Israel appeared to be defying three hitherto fairly benevolent giants all at once; the great powers, by transferring her Foreign Office to "forbidden"

ISRAEL's relations with the United States and the United Nations, except for a moderate recent upturn, have seemed to be deteriorating this past year, taking on a tone of truculence and mutual irritation; and along with this unhappy development, hope for the much desired early Arab-Israeli peace has been plunging downward. Just returned from his third visit to Israel, HAL LEHRMAN, who has had more experience than most American journalists in finding his way to the "unofficial" realities of Israeli politics, discusses here some of the sharper points of conflict, and the complexity of emotion, interest, and understanding at their roots. In a second article, Mr. Lehrman will analyze the more general political temper of which these particular incidents have been the expression, and will try to outline the future prospects for Israeli relations with the West, and for peace with the Arab states.

Jerusalem; the United Nations, by holding out for weeks against orders to stop work on a water-power project near the Syrian border; and world opinion, by ravaging an Arab village across the Jordan frontier called Kibya. The news of the latter adventure outraged even world Jewish opinion. A sign of the times was audience reaction to *The Jugger*, a Hollywood film about Israel. When Kirk Douglas drew a bead on an unsuspecting Arab patrol, a girl settler admonished him that "We don't shoot persons here in cold blood." Such scenes provoked hoots and whistles abroad this winter. In London major exhibitors decided not to run the film at all, judging their customers in no mood to accept fictional tributes to Israel.

Of course, it was not the first time Israel had talked back to someone bigger. But never before had she taken such harsh action on so many simultaneous fronts. And never before had the Israelis shown themselves so unremorseful. One may describe their attitude as sullen or as determined, according to one's point of departure. But it was certainly alarming, because of the near unanimity of the militant mood inside Israel and the further lengths to which it appeared ready to go, up to and including serious talk about an armed invasion of Jordan.

Since then, tension between Israel and the West has slackened. Israel and the United States particularly recognize that they agree on more matters than they disagree on. But the divergence on how to deal

with the Arabs—the problem at the heart of their previous differences—has not perceptibly diminished. This aspect becomes paramount again today with the renewal of frontier violence.

Neither the Anglo-American position nor the Israeli has been squarely presented. In Israel the "public relations" treatment of the various crises has been, not to mince words, deplorable. In the UN the Israeli delegation, led by Ambassador Abba Eban, has defended a difficult case eloquently but—by necessity—formally. Inhibitions have also censored the declarations of the great powers, particularly since each public syllable from them has had to be weighed for its effects on two opposing and prestige-conscious camps.

These repressions are less operative in private conversations with a writer gathering material for a personal report. Then views often emerge which, while perhaps inappropriate for public expression, give better insight into basic policies. Accordingly, I will set down as faithfully as I can how the recent controversies between Israel and the West are regarded, unofficially, by the people and foreign-policy makers of Israel, and by official Western representatives in their turn.

THE disturbed era in Israeli-West relations may be dated from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's tour of the Middle East last spring. According to the State Department, this trip should have been taken as proof of the new administration's good will toward Israel. It was the first visit ever made to the Middle East by an American Secretary of State. It was undertaken, I have been assured, largely because Israel had frequently called attention to worsening conditions there and urged the United States to take remedial action. On his return, the Secretary had in fact begun to put into motion the machinery for ultimate solution of several prime problems; notably Jerusalem, Arab-Israeli water power, and the Jordan-Israel border. But then Israel elected to hurl a wrench into the works. This is the American story. It is a story that leaves Israelis looking blank. Dulles's performance, they contend, served only to create the impression in the Arab mind that the United States was at last turning her face away from Israel. This was all the Arabs required to become more hostile and bellicose than ever. Moreover, the Arab impression

was not entirely wrong, according to the Israelis. Can there be much doubt, it is asked, that the Eisenhower administration seems inclined to go further than the Truman administration along the road towards Arab appeasement?

This painful contradiction in estimates becomes a violent contradiction in plain facts when one turns to the specific details of the conflicts that broke out after the Dulles visit. In each case, there is disagreement even over what happened, to say nothing of who was to blame. Consider, first, the case of Jerusalem.

IN ITS 1947 Partition resolution, the UN set the Holy City apart as a *corpus separatum*, not for the proposed Jewish or Arab state, but for the world. In the ensuing war, however, the world allowed Jerusalem to shift for itself, furnishing it with no protection or administration. Jordan, which held the Old City, had never accepted partition; the Israelis, who held the New City, considered their own acceptance of an internationalized Jerusalem nullified by UN failure and Jewish sacrifice. In 1948 and again in 1949 the General Assembly instructed, first the Palestine Conciliation Commission, then the Trusteeship Council, to get on with the writing of a special statute for Jerusalem. Nothing came of it except fleshless drafts and abortive compromise plans—rejected in a deadlocked Assembly, where neither the "internationalists" nor those willing to settle for UN supervision of limited areas around the Holy Places could collect enough votes for their conflicting solutions. Although the Assembly's pious reaffirmation of the city's international status in 1949 was never rescinded, efforts to carry it out lapsed.

Meanwhile life went on in divided Jerusalem. The two parties in possession tacitly endorsed each other's sovereignty. Both scrupulously respected and protected the religious monuments within their *de facto* jurisdiction. On the Arab side, the military regime eventually developed into a civilian administration regularized by unilateral annexation, together with the remnants of Palestine east of the Israeli borders, into the Kingdom of Jordan. On the Jewish side, population and economy and government grew more and more cohesive with the rest of Israel, the possibility of severance becoming increasingly unthinkable. Early in 1950 this

process of fusion, despite Vatican displeasure and Arab League clamor, was unilaterally ratified by the Knesset proclamation that Jerusalem had actually been Israel's capital from the moment of her birth.

In the wholesale exodus of Israeli government agencies from Tel Aviv, one significant exception was the Foreign Ministry. A capital is scarcely a capital without a resident Foreign Ministry; but neither is a Foreign Ministry quite a Foreign Ministry without a resident diplomatic corps. Transfer of the latter to Jerusalem would have amounted to admitting that UN internationalization was as dead in the letter as in the spirit. This, the powers were not prepared to do. Consequently the Israeli cabinet kept its foreign policy center in Tel Aviv. The arrangement was physically cumbersome, requiring Ministry officials to shuttle interminably between the two cities for adequate liaison with their own government. It was also embarrassing, implying as it did that Israel did not have full authority in what she considered to be her own house. In May 1952, it was announced that the Foreign Ministry would shift to Jerusalem—presumably when housing for it shortly became available in the new Kirya (government compound) under construction there. Certain of the powers—including the United States and Britain—firmly indicated that they could not approve this decision or join the trek to Jerusalem for the time being. The Kirya buildings were nearly ready when Mr. Dulles arrived a year later and had a talk with Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett.

In a formal conference between the two statesmen and their staffs in May, Sharett ticked off all the outstanding problems in Israeli-American relations and Dulles replied systematically and at some length on every point—except Jerusalem. The Israeli participants concluded that Dulles wished to consult his advisors on this and bring it up when the conversation was resumed at a dinner party in the Sharett home that evening. And indeed Dulles did bring it up: "By the way, Mr. Sharett, you mentioned Jerusalem this afternoon." Israelis within earshot logically assumed, I am told, that the Secretary was now about to deliver his policy reply. Here is where the confusion begins. Dulles is then supposed to have said something like this: "You know, I'd be very glad if you

didn't move your Ministry to Jerusalem while I'm in this part of the world. It would embarrass me." Since Dulles was only going to be around in the Middle East for about a fortnight, Sharett was smilingly able to reply: "That's perfectly all right. We're not in that much of a hurry." Then Dulles added, in earnest tones: "I wonder if I might offer a bit of advice. When you move, it would be a good thing if you accompanied the move with a declaration that this in no way prejudices the Holy Places and that their status will remain unaffected." To which Sharett is said to have promptly replied: "Mr. Dulles, I think that is very sound advice—and we shall do it."

The Israelis contend that anyone hearing this exchange would have had to conclude that the U. S. was not going to be surprised or shocked by a Jerusalem transfer. On July 10, long after Dulles was safely home, Director-General Walter Eytan circulated a polite letter to all diplomatic missions announcing that the Foreign Ministry's newly completed offices would be occupied as of July 13. The letter expressly guaranteed no change in the status of the Holy Places and reaffirmed a standing pledge to agree and cooperate "if at any time the United Nations finds it necessary and practicable to institute an all-round international supervision" over them. This was a direct result of the Dulles-Sharett conversation, the Israelis maintain. Imagine their consternation when the Western missions, headed by the American Embassy, clamped a boycott on Jerusalem!

WESTERN sources contend that Dulles never retreated an inch from the previous American position: on the contrary, just before the Secretary's arrival, the American Ambassador had visited Sharett to re-emphasize the opposition of his own and other UN-member governments to the transfer of the Foreign Ministry. How then could Dulles have reversed the decision of a dozen countries between the fish and meat courses? All he had said, according to the Western version, was something to the effect that Sharett should please not move the capital while he, Dulles, was in the Middle East. The United States had never violated a UN decision and was not going to begin now, especially after having poured out so much blood in Korea to uphold the UN.

But Dulles, it is intimated, left Israel determined to help break the Jerusalem logjam. His reasoning was that Israel could hardly persuade the Arabs and the Catholic Church to accept any plan of hers. It was up to some outside power to seek a way out. The State Department was therefore put to work on this, and was making "some progress"—though I could learn nothing concrete about it—when suddenly along came the Eytan letter announcing that the Israeli Foreign Ministry would be open for business in Jerusalem three days later. Naturally, the United States had no choice except to stand firm against such arbitrary procedure.

But if the United States was making "some progress" on a Jerusalem settlement, why was it kept secret from the Israeli government? The Israelis are inclined to believe that nothing was being done at all. They interpret the American boycott as unfriendly and even mischievous, and the American stress on the UN as a transparent alibi. Before Dulles came, they recall, official Americans had no scruples about visiting the Foreign Minister if he happened to be in Jerusalem, despite the UN resolution. The United States was fully represented in the diplomatic gallery when President Itzhak Ben-Zvi was sworn in at the Knesset. Dulles himself called on Prime Minister Ben Gurion in Jerusalem. But since the Foreign Ministry moved, the Embassy has not only forbidden all official Americans to meet with official Israelis in Jerusalem—even socially—but brought pressure on other countries to stay away, extending the ban to such innocuous events as the "Conquest of the Desert" exposition. The Israelis assess this attitude as reflecting a desire on the part of Dulles and Eisenhower to appease, not the UN, but the Arabs.

Whatever the responsibility, all agree that the present situation is absurd. Israel is officially incommunicado from the West's representatives on her own soil, except for the Dutch and the Greeks (who always have had missions in Jerusalem). The only formal contact is through a solitary liaison officer established at the old Kirya in Tel Aviv merely as a relay runner for notes and messages. Because prestige is involved on both sides, an Israeli spokesman can talk with a Western spokesman only if they "happen" to meet at some private party outside Jerusalem, without publicity. This isolation—compelling

Israel to rely mainly on reports from her representatives overseas—is admittedly detrimental to all participants: Israel cannot present her own case on various issues to the diplomats sent to Israel to hear it; Israel's friends cannot help with advice or even express their own point of view. This condition is only partially relieved by a tendency lately for informal meetings at "private parties" to increase.

The British and other non-American diplomatic observers from the West who were not privy to the disputed Dulles-Sharet exchange seem to have been genuinely startled by the Foreign Ministry's "abrupt" transfer. As one envoy put it to me: "The Israelis should have first warned us to get up some resolution for the last General Assembly settling the problem of Jerusalem as a capital. If we had declined or failed, they could then have told us with good grace that they had no choice except to move. In that event, I feel we could have worked out a reasonable agreement. We might have accepted going up to Jerusalem one day a week, and they could have come down on another day, and so forth. But the Israelis weren't so tactful."

AFTER Jerusalem, B'not Ya'akov is another point on Israel's map which has lately stuck out like a sore thumb.

By itself, the B'not Ya'akov hydroelectric project would interest few except technicians. But the dispute over it is connected with more crucial matters, particularly the problems of sovereignty in demilitarized areas and of regional planning for maximum exploitation of Middle Eastern resources.

The Western view is that every country in the Levant would benefit much from efficient use of the region's irrigation and power resources. These resources are not contained within neat national boundaries, but spread across frontiers. They can be best made effective through regional planning and coordinated exploitation by Israel and her Arab neighbors. One glance at the lake and river systems in the area makes this obvious.

Israel, say American observers, agreed to the regional approach. In fact she urged the United States as late as last July to seek a regional water plan including the Jordan. American experts were at work drawing up such a plan (ultimately brought out to the Middle East last fall by Eric Johnston as

President Eisenhower's personal representative). But despite this, Israel on September 2, without previous notice or consultation, began digging a large canal from B'not Ya'akov, in the demilitarized zone on the Israeli-Syrian frontier, to Lake Tiberias, diverting water from the Jordan river for Israel's exclusive advantage.

If the Israelis really meant what they said about common planning, the Americans think, the best way to demonstrate it was certainly not by taking water out of the Jordan for themselves. Even if—as the Israelis pointed out—that part of the Jordan was in their territory, they could hardly go ahead on their own while pleading for co-operative organization. The only result was to antagonize the Arabs further against any water plan involving Israel.

United States and United Nations representatives in the field when I arrived, shortly after the B'not Ya'akov dispute flared, were especially annoyed by what they felt was either irresponsibility or deceit in the sudden Israeli move. There had been no entry for the project in the Israeli budget, they said. Nobody in the Israeli government knew, or seemed to know, when endorsing regional cooperation in July, that independent Israeli operations would begin in September. The office of our Foreign Operations Administration (FOA) in Tel Aviv, which has a prime interest in Israeli water programs, received no intimation that the Jordan works were to be started in the fiscal year. It was not until September 4, two days after ground was broken, that any non-Israeli authority knew work had begun. No hint of the project's real scope was given when Israel asked the UN's acting chairman of the Syrian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC), an American colonel, whether he had any objections to it. He answered orally that he did not, provided no private rights were infringed. It took a few days, and the arrival of "more and more bulldozers" and other heavy equipment, before he could appreciate the implications and fully advise Danish Major General Vagn Bennike, chief of staff of the UN's Truce Supervision Organization. The Syrians, for the same reason, were also slow in catching on, I was told, which accounted for the delay in their protesting to General Bennike that Israel was violating the demilitarized zone agreement.

THIS 1949 agreement had secured withdrawal of Syrian troops from a sector on the west bank of the Jordan occupied by them during the Arab-Israeli war. According to the armistice terms, negotiated with the aid of UN Mediator Ralph J. Bunche, "no military or political advantage should be gained" in the zone by either side under the Security Council truce. The zone's purpose was solely to separate the two armies so "as to minimize the possibility of friction and incident, while providing for the gradual restoration of normal civilian life in the area . . . without prejudice to the ultimate settlement" in a peace treaty to be finally drawn up. Zonal administration, it was understood in a letter of clarification at the time from Dr. Bunche, was to be "under the general supervision of the chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission."

The Syrians now charged that the canal would enable Israel to reduce at will the depth of the Jordan, thus nullifying the purpose of the demilitarized zone as a natural barrier, especially against motorized invading forces. The Syrians alleged further that the diggings disturbed "normal civilian life" by partially flooding an Arab-owned island and damaging other Arab property. (The Israelis deny Arab ownership of the strip of land involved; if so, the Syrians asked, why did the Israelis offer to buy the strip a few years ago?) Damascus also complained that the diggings caused Arab-owned water mills to shut down, threatened the operation of others, and would reduce the water supply of adjacent Arab farm lands.

Upon preliminary inquiry, Bennike felt he had found enough presumption of truth in these claims to order a halt on the project until a settlement could be reached. Israel refused, despite the clear right of the MAC chairman to intervene. On further investigation, the UN chief of staff decided that the project would create even greater disturbance to "normal civilian life" unless Israel undertook "definite obligations" to avoid them. The Israelis persisted in their defiance even after the matter had been referred to the Security Council. It was only when Secretary Dulles announced the withholding of American grant-in-aid that she was finally forced to yield. Her entire performance, in the American view, was a willful flouting of international pledges and obligations.

ISRAELI spokesmen deny each item in this bill. They begin by taking apart the charge that Israel had first asked the Americans to develop an area water plan, then tried to sabotage it by unilateral action. It is true that Israel in July urged the regional approach on the United States. But in what context? Washington had then been nursing a scheme for the Yarmuk river, which rises in Arab territory but borders and cuts into Israel before joining the Jordan. Under the American plan the Yarmuk would have been exploited solely for Arab benefit. We Israelis had objected that this Yarmuk program was inequitable, and said we preferred a truly regional program that would distribute the Yarmuk's as well as the Jordan's resources to all contiguous countries and also include the Lebanon's Litani river, which would contribute nearly 60 per cent of the water available for any proper regional plan but now runs to waste. In any case, we Israelis had pleaded, there ought to be a clear decision: either a genuine regional plan, or none at all—in which latter event nobody could rightly object to our developing our Jordan resources in a manner helpful to us and harmless to others.

To this proposal the Americans, it seems, had made no rejoinder whatsoever. Our suggestions, the Israelis say, drew an absolute blank. How, then, could the Americans expect us to feel committed to a principle they had not accepted? Actually, the Americans went on to scrap the Yarmuk plan after all—but they didn't bother to tell us. And they began their own plan, again without telling us—though we were discussing water with them constantly. We knew nothing about Washington's intentions until the plan was divulged to the press—after we had inaugurated B'not Ya'akov.*

The B'not Ya'akov project contains no mysteries or surprises, the Israelis declare. We had been openly discussing it for years before its inception. We even put it on

display at the "Conquest of the Desert" show. As for B'not Ya'akov's damage to Arab interests, this is pure imagination, say the Israelis. Property owned by Arabs was carefully avoided in the digging operations; a preferred site was abandoned in order to do so. Firm assurances were given that the full volume of Jordan water previously utilized by Arab landowners would be available. The Arab-owned island allegedly flooded is under water every winter, has never been cultivated, is not owned by any Arab, and has not been flooded. The Syrians, in many talks with the Israelis, had never before claimed that mills on the Jordan's east bank used Jordan water. The mills supposedly cut off by the diggings had ceased to function several years earlier. They actually stand *above* the proposed canal.

Syria had no right to raise the question of "military advantage," which referred in the armistice only to the truce prior to that armistice. Whether a canal was dug or not, no troops could be in the demilitarized zone so long as the zonal agreement remained in force. Actually, the more canals and other obstructions, the more difficult any troop movements from either side.

IF ANY private rights were being jeopardized, they were *Israeli* rights, held under a legal 1926 concession to the Palestine Electric Corporation, reaffirmed under the Syrian armistice, and now infringed by cessation of operations. Add also the private rights of the Israeli people in general, needlessly restrained from obtaining cheap and vital electric power for their farms, factories, and homes.

No UN opposition arose until the Syrian government began making "baseless" objections—in line with "its established practice" of harassment—and threats of violence which impelled UN representatives on the ground to reverse their earlier approval for the project. For topographical reasons, the utmost development of Syrian lands beyond the

*The plan presented by Eric Johnston was written by the Boston engineering firm of Charles T. Main for the Tennessee Valley Authority, the latter having taken over the project at the request of the UN's Palestine refugee relief agency, UNRWA. The Boston consultants, who made no visit to the area they were planning for, described their product as a "desk study." Israelis complain that it ignores the latest and best research.

The B'not Ya'akov project, they claim, will produce more power at less expense. Informally, however, their chief objection to the over-all TVA proposal is that it does not squarely face up to the political problems of the area, but, according to the Israelis, panders to Arab belligerence. Israel nevertheless has not rejected the plan, and now is studying it officially.

Jordan could not possibly utilize more than two per cent of the river's flow. Hence the real Syrian motive is not development of Syria, but obstruction of Israel. The fact that the disputed zone has been demilitarized does not make any part of it Syrian. The whole area lies on the Israeli side of the international border. As a matter of fact, the Jordan nowhere touches Syrian territory. The only purpose of demilitarization was to "separate" the two armies and bar military or para-military forces. True, the question of "sovereignty" was not "raised" in the armistice. But, not having been raised, it cannot be "suspended," and therefore stays where it was—with Israel. True also, Syrian troops evacuated the zone voluntarily—but didn't we pull *our* troops back from the Lebanon and from deep in Egypt? We don't interfere there; why should we tolerate Arab interference with our sovereignty here? As for the UN, we did not resist its jurisdiction. Bennike never indicated whom he wanted Israel to agree with. Sharett had offered, verbally and in writing, to stop work pending an agreement with Bennike—but *not* with Syria, who had no right to intervene.

Moreover, Mediator Bunche, speaking for the UN, had given us assurances that the demilitarized zone would not be kept "a vacuum or wasteland." Acceptance of Syria's claim to a veto over economic projects would condemn Israel to economic stagnation. "Restoration of normal civilian life," as prescribed in Article V of the armistice, may mean apathy for the Syrians, but to us it means action. Indeed the UN itself had previously concurred in major Israeli development programs inside the demilitarized zone. These had built settlements and roads, recovered waste territory, deepened and straightened the Jordan river bed, and even altered its course. B'not Ya'akov takes nothing from the Syrians. It does not consume water for irrigation. It merely diverts water into a canal to obtain hydroelectric power from a precipitate drop in water level between Lakes Huleh and Tiberias. Then all the water is sluiced back into the Jordan. Nowhere else in the whole region can electricity be created so inexpensively. Yet it was against so progressive and constructive an intention that Dulles found it necessary to swing so mighty a sledge hammer as the suspension of America's entire aid program to Israel!

TODAY the hurt on both sides of the bitter B'not Ya'akov argument has quieted. Israel received fair treatment at the Security Council. The United States and Britain worked well and earnestly there for a resolution which would avoid taking sides on the issue but authorize General Bennike to try reconciling Israeli and local interests by further study, and take any steps he considered necessary, including permission to resume the B'not Ya'akov work. Syria resisted on grounds that she was entitled to a veto over any Bennike decision in Israel's favor. The Soviets, eternally stirring the Levantine waters, obligingly vetoed the UN proposal. Israel might have treated the resolution as vindication of her resistance to Syrian meddling, and the Security Council's failure as a green light to resume work. Instead, she has offered in effect to cooperate with General Bennike as if the resolution to re-investigate had been passed.

Mr. Dulles's deliberate delay in making available a first 26 million dollar slice of 1953-54 grant-in-aid to Israel is now seen by neutral observers as a major American diplomatic boner.

At the time Washington denied that the Big Stick of economic assistance was being brandished to force political docility. Our record shows, I was told at our Tel Aviv Embassy, that we do not offer aid in order to "buy" satellites: U.S. aid is premised on the supposition that the recipient will cooperate with us and other countries for peace. But peace would not have been encouraged, said the Americans, by rewarding Israel at the precise moment when she was resisting a legitimate UN request.

It appeared to the Israelis, however, that the State Department, which treated Arab sensibilities so gingerly, seemed to show much less concern for Jewish feelings. (Egypt had been defying the Security Council for two years over Suez—without losing American aid.) To many in a country filled with people harried by memories of persecution, the crude and unprecedented American move inevitably appeared as an outright act of discrimination with anti-Semitic overtones. To nearly everyone else in Israel it looked, at least, like the act of a bully. It needlessly dissipated much good will for the United States. It was widely interpreted, not as an American prop for the UN, but as

just another American overture to the Arabs. And it aroused resentment among *other* small and middling states inside and outside the UN: if the Americans can do this to Israel today, they can try the same tomorrow on *us*. American economic aid had been suspended in certain areas before for pressure purposes. But only on strictly internal economic grounds directly pertinent to the aid program, never as intervention in a recipient's foreign policy.

Conversely, Israel's behavior over B'not Ya'akov seemed to fall short of inspired statesmanship. Her Foreign Ministry had haggled with the UN's representative for weeks after his first request to halt the digging. In the end—so it looked to the outside world—she had had to be bludgeoned into obeying a reasonable order. How much better, cooler heads asked, if Israel had firmly gone on record at the outset as disagreeing with Bennike—and then had consented to cease operations pending her own appeal to the Security Council? This would have brought her into the UN hearings as the aggrieved party, with dignity and with clean hands.

The one useful aspect of the dispute was its reminder of the dangers in permanent reliance on makeshift agreements. The Israeli-Syrian armistice terms on evacuation of Arab troops and subsequent demilitarization had been kept deliberately vague. The only considerations at the time were military. Both sides—and Dr. Bunche—had conspired not to dot the *i*'s on matters of sovereignty and jurisdiction in the contested area. They knew that otherwise no armistice would be reached. The outcome had been a masterpiece of conciliation and confusion—each side free to interpret the fuzzy language to suit itself. In the continued absence of a treaty, the postponed issues were now cropping up to plague Israel and Syria—and the UN.

There was another inadequate armistice, on another Israeli frontier, where the peril was even greater—because blood was flowing there, not just water. For lack of a peace treaty, Jordan's border with Israel had brought forth the "Kibya Affair."

HERE again official Americans see the pacification efforts of U.S. diplomacy frustrated by Israeli hot-headedness.

According to this view, Mr. Dulles was

so aware of the dangerous situation created by Jordan-Israeli border raids that he personally addressed himself to it while he was in the Middle East. When he appealed to Jordan Premier Fawzi Mulki to arrange talks with Israel, the latter suggested reinstatement of the Local Commanders' Agreement (a system which facilitated liaison between opposite numbers on the spot in restraint of border violators, and which Israel had denounced the previous January because of alleged infringement by Jordan). Dulles wrote to Ben Gurion urging that he take the first step to put the Agreement back into effect. The Prime Minister complied, and in early June it was restored, to immediate good effect. September was the quietest month in the Jordan-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission's history. When an admittedly serious assault on Israeli territory occurred in early October, causing three Jewish deaths, Jordan permitted Israeli search across her border for the culprits, pressed an energetic investigation of her own under personal direction of Arab Legion Chief of Staff Glubb Pasha himself, and pleaded with the Israelis not to retaliate.

Notwithstanding these evidences of Jordan's good faith, the critics of Israel continue, Israeli armed forces two nights later, on October 14, attacked the undefended village of Kibya, across the line from Lydda, destroying some forty houses and killing over fifty civilians, most of them women and children. This act was especially wanton because committed at a moment when prospects were excellent for improvement of the border situation about which Israel had been complaining so loudly. With the Jordanians—and the entire Arab world—crying for revenge, the border now stood more embattled and venomous than ever. As for the rest of the indignant world, it would not have accepted less than the denunciation of Israel which Britain and the United States immediately made, and the collective condemnation of her as an aggressor voted after a full November hearing in the Security Council.

To this flat censure, the Israelis respond with a point-by-point refutation. They concede only that the death of innocent non-combatants at Kibya was deplorable. They do not admit that Israeli troops were responsible. They deny that the restored Local Commanders' Agreement induced any gen-

uine pacification. There had been nine Israelis killed, seven injured, and one kidnapped in July and August, and six "incidents" in the "quiet month" of September. They deny that any satisfaction could have been expected from Jordan's investigation of the latest crime against an Israeli village. They deny that the over-all problem of border violation was even remotely approaching a solution when the Kibya incident occurred. They believe that the Security Council's condemnation of Israel, without equal condemnation of earlier Jordan outrages—and without summoning the Arabs to negotiate a final peace settlement—was tantamount to encouraging the Arabs to continue a state of war against Israel.

In the first shock of the news from Kibya, friends of Israel abroad clutched at extenuating circumstances in the events immediately preceding it to explain—if not justify—the attack. Ten days before Kibya, marauders had fired on a crowded passenger bus near Lydda. Two days later they had attacked a Haifa-Tel Aviv passenger train. Two nights before Kibya, in Moshav Yahud on the Lydda-Tel Aviv road, a young mother, her small daughter, and her baby son had been murdered by a hand-grenade tossed into the room where they and five others lay sleeping.

But these crimes were not the vindication on which the Israeli rejoinder relied. Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett's reply, on October 22, to an October 16 British communiqué flaying Israel, stated that the Kibya affair was being taken out of context: it had to be examined, not in isolation, but as one more incident in a long history of frontier violence of which Israel had been by far the greater victim. Arab marauding was not, as piously pictured, the understandable little bursts of spleen from dispossessed Palestinian refugees seeking recovery of what had once been theirs, or vengeance for its loss. It was an organized, para-military program of sabotage, espionage, and terror, with the aid of the Jordan police and even of the British-commanded Arab Legion—and with the aid of the ineffective UN machinery ostensibly designed to curb it.

LOOK at the statistics, the Israelis said. The Mixed Armistice Commission itself had confirmed no less than 1,208 illegal border crossings from Jordan between January and

September just prior to Kibya. In the preceding twelve months there had been 3,742 such incursions—inflicting an estimated direct economic loss on Israel of more than two and a half million dollars. Marauders tore up sections of precious irrigation piping, drove off livestock, cut electric power lines, dynamited railway tracks, ravaged orchards, groves, and woods, set fire to houses, stole seed, fertilizer, tools, and farm equipment. Since May 1950—when Britain, France, and the U. S. "guaranteed" the borders of Israel—there had been 3,263 thefts and burglaries, 122 armed robberies, 866 clashes with armed infiltrators on Israeli soil—and 421 Israelis killed or wounded.

Were they less dead, simply because they had been killed a few at a time, than those Arabs who had died all at once at Kibya? Was the Kibya attack more of an "atrocious" because it had lasted hours instead of years?

Some of the border raids could indeed be the desperate acts of individual Arab peasants. But it would require invincible indifference to facts, the Israelis maintained, to blink away the evidence that many of the raids revealed planning, direction, and controlled purpose. Would hungry Arabs commandeer Jordanian tanks and lay a barrage down over an Israeli highway? Would destitute refugees set mines capable of blowing up 250 yards of track and derailing a locomotive and thirteen freight cars? Would homeless *fellahin* attack communication lines at all, rather than pilfer chickens? Would they steal Sten guns and rifles from Jordan arsenals just to shoot at Israeli jeeps—or would they aim at army vehicles rather than at sheep?

There were cases in MAC files of Arab operations carried out with split-second precision. As example, a senior Israeli Army officer described to me an attack on a Jewish outpost in the Judean hills. The objective was an outpost held by two sentries. The assailants moved up without detection. Previous reconnoitering had established the exact moment when the guard was changed. The infiltrators held their fire until the relief sentries arrived—when all four men were simultaneously exposed for an instant. As soon as shooting commenced at close range against this visible target, another enemy group opened diversionary fire on the main Israeli camp. As the two attacking groups

swiftly withdrew, covering fire from a third group held off the pursuers. It was a highly synchronized and perfectly executed military operation involving three distinct units—hardly the work of amateurs. On other occasions, the bodies of individual Israeli soldiers killed in ambush had been divested only of documents giving their identity numbers and units—a clue to defensive battle strength in the area. Israeli encampments had been penetrated at night for the sole apparent motive of jimmying desk drawers and taking papers possibly useful to military intelligence—without anything else being stolen. Pass books and papers are not edible: would a simple refugee break into an army office instead of an army kitchen or supply depot?

KIBYA, according to my Israeli informants, was not just a somnolent village. MAC archives show that the tracks of participants in several raids led back to Kibya. Jordan told us through MAC, the Israelis say, that she wanted the frontier quiet but didn't know where to look for raiders. We thereupon produced a list of their names—including some inhabitants of Kibya. But Jordan did nothing about it.

The relatively well-disciplined Arab Legion, which had previously patrolled the border, was reportedly replaced at the beginning of 1953 by a so-called National Guard—largely recruited from the frontier villages. This force stimulated rather than prevented incursions. Israelis claim cause to believe that it has supplied arms to raiders, furnished protective fire at moments of withdrawal, and even taken a cut of the occasional loot.

The Arab Legion, it is charged, was also directly involved at times. In several instances, direct proof has been allegedly obtained. A document signed by a Jordan intelligence officer and found on the body of a marauder killed in Israeli territory read in Arabic: "To whom it may concern—the bearer of this permit, Mahmud Sulaiman, from Nablus, is on special duty. Please do not stop him." Two raiders captured in another clash reportedly admitted that they belonged to the National Guard, and had been sent across the line by the Legion for sabotage and espionage. Such disclosures, the Israelis contend, further expose the

hypocritical professions of the Legion that it is powerless to hold back "a million desperate refugees." Israeli defense forces cannot guard every yard of the 330-mile Jordan frontier—but the Legion, knowing every infiltrator and every loophole, could cork the border up overnight, if the will to do so existed.

Nor do the Israelis—informally—absolve Britain herself of hypocritical involvement, especially in the light of London's virtuous outcry against the "barbarism" of Kibya. For Israelis, the Legion is patently a British creature—drilled, officered, and financed from Britain. It is a preposterous fiction that Glubb Pasha and his colleague, who have ostensibly surrendered their British nationality, scrupulously refrain from serving what they consider to be Britain's interests. That they go further, and obey Britain's orders, is suggested by the consternation in the Tel Aviv British Embassy one day when a high-level Israeli rumor circulated that the Legion would breach the armistice that night by attacking the UN-inviolable Israeli guard on Mount Scopus. At an emergency meeting of diplomats to consider the grave threat, the British Ambassador, betraying much distress, is reliably reported to have expostulated that Glubb Pasha simply can't do this, you know—it's not according to plan!

Instead of controlling the frontier, the Israelis assert, Jordan authorities deny complicity in the raids and are not above destroying evidence of such attacks or even manufacturing evidence to the contrary. In one instance, the body of a murdered Israeli soldier was carried nearly a mile toward Jordan territory in an effort to "prove" Israel the aggressor; to delay MAC investigators long enough to arrange this, shots had been fired at them, as a later MAC resolution censuring Jordan testified. In another case, Israel was accused of attacking the Jordan village of Beit Ikhsa; native authorities showed MAC representatives "human" bloodstains that were later demonstrated to be cow's blood. After Kibya, Jordan allegedly invented—for propaganda effect—two more Israeli "raids," both of them announced in Jordan press releases but never presented to MAC.

Jordan's desire to reduce illegal border crossings by Arab refugees is belied, the Israelis say, by her rejection of offers to rectify the border, even in the refugees' favor. When

attempts of inhabitants of Qalqiliya to till their former farms caused frontier tension, Israel proposed giving Jordan fertile land in the Qalqiliya area in return for *uncultivated* land south of the Dead Sea. During similar tension around Latrun, Israel suggested a land barter which would have given Jordan 5,000 dunams more than Israel. When two mistakes—one for each side—were detected in the armistice line near Zeita, Israel volunteered to recognize the *de facto* situation and alter the maps in order to avoid more land-exchange disputes or splitting of Arab families. In the first and third of the above, Jordan first agreed, then reneged. In the second, she refused outright.

Two days after Kibya, Israel filed with General Bennike a list of "some of the cases" in which specific information had been delivered to Jordan to help her accomplish "her task in fighting against infiltration from Jordan"—these cases had also been aired in official Israeli complaints at MAC meetings. Some sample items: a known border smuggler recruited into the National Guard; a lieutenant who had stolen Israeli crops; fourteen raiders returned by Israel to Jordan a few days before most of them were recaptured in Israel; two Bedouin assassins in Jordan custody known to have killed an Israeli Bedouin but later permitted to escape. In no instance, General Bennike was advised, had Jordan taken any action or MAC been able to secure it.

THE General himself, in the Israeli view, exhibited naivety, if nothing worse, in accepting Jordan's pledges that the Yahud killers would be hunted and punished. His "one-sided" report on Kibya to the Security Council—particularly his assertion that Israel occasionally hampered the movements of UN observers—caused great indignation in Israel. Israelis now recall with nostalgia Bennike's predecessor, American Lieutenant General W. E. Riley, who was able by a combination of firmness and cajolery to quiet threatening situations and keep tension at a minimum after each fresh outbreak. He was largely responsible for the first meetings up and down the border between local commanders, some of whom had direct telephone lines to one another for instant consultation on trouble in their sectors.

But not all UN personnel were as im-

partial as Riley, Israelis feel. They remember notably a Belgian, Colonel Bennet de Ridder, who, when confronted with the bloodstains of several murdered Israeli guards, quipped that for all he knew it might be donkey's blood! Too many UN observers, it is suggested, fall for the traditional Arab charm and the picturesque Oriental indirectness, contrasted with which the blunt and brisk Israeli manner sometimes appears to be overbearing. Besides, at the time of Kibya there were only nineteen UN military observers available to "supervise" Israel's frontiers with Syria, the Lebanon, and Egypt, as well as Jordan. They were overworked, under-equipped, and somewhat at sea in the confusion. Under such circumstances, it seemed futile to expect swift action in determining guilt and achieving justice.

The solution, nevertheless, does not lie in mere reinforcement of the Observer Corps, which was proposed during Security Council hearings. As a matter of fact, Israelis argue, this would be a step backward, toward the primitive Truce machinery which preceded the armistices. Those armistices, with Jordan and other Arab belligerents, provided for the Mixed Commissions composed of one delegate from each side and a UN chairman to cast the deciding vote in event of tie.

They were designed to fix responsibility for violations and exert pressure for remedial action and punishment of culprits. They did some good in the early days, but have long since lost every function except to serve as "statistical bureaus" for the recording of violence. Scarcely a month before Kibya, the MAC agenda was so overloaded that it was agreed to "wipe out" 338 pending cases without investigation. And if a MAC decision does declare Jordan guilty in any incident, the Israelis cry, it no longer helps prevent further incidents—and certainly does not restore our dead to life.

What needs to be done now, they insist, is to move to the next phase envisaged in the armistice with Jordan: negotiation of a peace treaty. Bennike himself admitted to the Security Council that "the Armistice agreements have lasted too long not to have lost part of their effectiveness." But they have endured "too long" only because Jordan, profiting from Israeli economic disorder and the military strain induced by border law-

lessness, has refused to make the peace which the armistice prescribes.

Israel cannot agree to being permanently saddled with a MAC which was meant to be only an interim organ. That is why Israel welcomed the UN inquiry into Kibya. She hoped that not just Kibya but its context and causes would be put under scrutiny. She demanded, in fact, that priority be given to the "main objective" of the armistice—the "transition to permanent peace"—which Jordan had consistently flaunted despite previous UN injunctions.

Here, as the Israelis saw it, was a matchless opportunity for the Security Council. But its resolution censuring Israel passed over Jordan's "murders" in silence, failing, as Ben Gurion noted with "amazement," to call for a peace parley, let alone take measures to compel one. Israel saw herself left with no alternative but to affirm her sacred duty, by "all legitimate measures in our power, to insure that Jewish lives, too, shall not be left unprotected." In the end, desperately, she asked that, if the Jordanians rejected a formal peace, they should at least be required to confer on making the armistice itself work adequately—but this too failed because of Jordan's intransigence.

ANGLO-AMERICAN diplomatic circles and UN professionals in the area find this Israeli analysis of the Jordan border problem a shade too righteous and black-and-white. While conceding that all would indeed be well if Jordan were somehow persuaded to sign the peace, they reject Israel's assumption that innocence and injury are concentrated on her side, and that the West needs only to hammer the Arabs down in order to set everything right.

They suggest that Israel tends to exaggerate the military nature of the Arab infiltrations, minimize their spontaneity, and forget all about her own armistice violations. UN technical experts inspecting Arab sabotage on rail and other installations usually find it amateurish. Invariably, it is said, the wreckers have used the wrong kind of explosive, or picked the wrong section of rail to blow up, or damaged a water pipe so feebly that repairs can be finished in a few hours. There really are homeless and angry borderland Palestine refugees. They do live crowded and hungry, able daily from their

hovels to see the rich fields and tidy Israeli homesteads beyond the line. They do cross over to get food from land they think they still own or to take revenge on those who own it now. And the Israelis cross over too, not always by mistake or in pursuit of Arab attackers.

Both sides are engaged with equal fury in the *fassad*, the "blood feud," it is insisted. Israeli dead with military equipment have been found in Jordan without having been carried there. If the total of Israeli casualties since the 1950 Tripartite Declaration is 421, Jordan's for the same period is 527. And these figures relate only to Israeli territory. Nothing can be demonstrated from such statistics, especially since the Arabs do not keep records of total casualties on *their* side of the line. In the MAC's inquiries into complaint and counter-complaint during four years, according to the Bennike report, it has condemned Jordan 50 times for violations of various armistice provisions—but it has also condemned Israel 63 times!

Israelis lack a sense of proportion, some onlookers declare. If an Arab should chance to wander into Israel after his stray cows and get himself shot, the Israeli press righteously announces another "repulsed raid." But if an Israeli wandering into Jordan is picked off, the newspapers scream murder and—as a UN observer long enough in Israel to acquire some local jargon expressed it—"the whole bloody country sits *shiva*." The fact is that the atmosphere is too frenzied and the straggling frontier is too long and vague, for control to be effective. If the skilled and mechanized Israeli Army admits its inability to seal the border, why expect the Jordan National Guard or the Arab Legion (or the faraway British) to do it?

A UN observer's lot is not a happy one, I was assured. As soon as he seems to be deciding in favor of one side, the unfortunate UN man is bombarded with accusations of bias from the other. Invariably, the Israeli outcry is shriller, the roar of innocence more deafening—a factor, the UN people admit, which can become irritating: "After all, we're only human." They have the impression, too, that Arab incursions across the border are in general individual or poorly planned enterprises, whereas Israeli violations seem mainly deliberate and part of an organized pattern—semi-official, one might say

—and therefore more compromising. Both sides, it is noted with some asperity, “protest too much” about MAC’s alleged uselessness: “Jordan or Israel will sulk, and mutter about ‘boycotting’ us—but as soon as a new incident flares up, the side that thinks it has a case starts screaming for an *immediate* investigation.” The truth is, according to UN operatives, that MAC is a safety-valve. Without it, the border would long since have exploded. Of course the armistices have lost some effectiveness, but, as Bennike also informed the Security Council, “they still constitute a barrier to breaches of the peace.”

And it is obtuse of the Israelis to pretend that Kibya was merely another incident, their critics say, or that it was a justified punitive expedition. Proof that the place was defenseless is clear from the later tumult in Arab territory: the scared inhabitants of Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, and Jericho demonstrated and went on strike, demanding more protection for themselves and a clean-up of the Arab Legion, which had failed to save Kibya. The Jordan government had to demote or dismiss a number of its security officials. Kibya was different because of its frightful death toll and the shockingly calculated planning. The world had to take an unequivocal stand. It was hardly the occasion, as the Israelis insist, to call on the bereaved, enraged Arabs to make peace. If the Security Council had not rendered moral satisfaction to them through its forthright, unqualified denunciation of Israel, the Arabs would have had good cause to denounce the Security Council instead—and then the prospects for border peace would have become more remote than ever.

LOOKING back today on Kibya, one thing alone is evident beyond dispute: that it did do vast damage to Israel’s reputation abroad. Apart from humanitarian considerations Kibya was, at the least, a blunder of great political magnitude. If it is true that Israel’s most precious asset is the sympathy of the free world, then Kibya can have no defense, no apologia, even on the level of practical politics and plain survival.

But such a judgment does not resolve the more intimate and immediate issue in the narrower physical framework of the Middle East itself—the issue of peace and how best to obtain it. The extent of official Israeli

culpability in the Kibya incident is still not clear, despite the UN’s verdict or Ben Gurion’s denial. But right or wrong, deliberate or spontaneous, whatever the paradox in the use of force, the attack was meant to drive the Arabs toward an acceptance of *peace*. Second-guessing on the wisdom or folly of such a tactic is an unrewarding mental exercise. There are those who contend that Israel would have helped peace more by refraining from Kibya and appealing the Yahud murders instead—coming as the aggrieved party to the Security Council and demanding Jordan’s compliance with Article XII of the armistice for direct negotiations on border problems. We know from the latest Bennike report to the Council, dated March 2, that tension on the Israel-Jordan border has remained high in the three months past: 294 new Israeli complaints against Jordan; 211 new counter-complaints against Israel. Similarly, the mid-March murder of a busload of Israelis in the Negev scarcely suggests that Kibya was a successful deterrent to Jordanian guerrillas. On the other hand, we also know that UN efforts to obtain Jordan’s presence at a conference with Israel under Article XII or any other device have until now been vain and give not the slightest promise of success in any foreseeable time.

Nor does a judgment, one way or the other, on Israeli moral guilt and political maladroitness at Kibya bring any illumination to the pressing, practical issue that remains: how effect peace between the Arabs and Israel; nor on the crucial factors for that desired permanent peace: future Israeli behavior and the future policy of the West. And in turn these bring up two further questions: first, what was the reaction of the Israelis themselves to Kibya and the UN’s action, and what is their present temper? It is, one might hazard in advance, a temper which may explode unless given more consideration than hitherto. Secondly, can the Arabs be made loyal partners in the free world’s system of defense—and, if so, how? On this the disagreement between Israel and the West since Kibya—though possibly somewhat lessened by the political impotence currently shown by several Arab countries—remains at this writing a source of potential embitterment in the disordered times ahead.

(A 2nd article by Mr. Lehrman will follow.)